

Assembly Planning Template and Guidance

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This resource acts as both a template and a guidance document for planning an assembly in response to a controversial or sensitive issue. The structure, content suggestions, and timings below are illustrated throughout using a worked example: an assembly delivered in the days following a major terror attack.

How to Use This Document

Each section contains two layers:

- **Template fields** to complete with your own content, shown in plain text.
- **Worked examples** drawn from a terror attack scenario, shown in blue callout boxes. These are illustrative only — delete or replace them as appropriate.

Work through the sections in order before the assembly is delivered. Complete Sections 1 and 2 before building slides. Complete Section 4 (Safeguarding) before finalising any content.

Before You Start

Assemblies are not lessons. Keep the purpose clear before you begin.

An assembly should	An assembly should not
✓ Introduce awareness	✗ Attempt full debate
✓ Model language and behaviour	✗ Resolve complex ideological issues
✓ Set shared norms	✗ Include extended discussion tasks
✓ Signpost support	✗ Become an open Q&A forum

If deeper exploration is needed after the assembly, plan follow-up sessions. Assembly introduces. Workshops deepen.

Section 1: Assembly Overview

Title: Keep it short and clear.

Example:

"Understanding What Happened: Staying Safe, Staying Together" A title like this is factual without being alarmist, and signals both emotional support and collective purpose, which is appropriate for the days following a publicised attack.

Year Group: KS3 / KS4 / KS5

Length: 10 / 15 / 20 minutes

Why this matters now Local incident / online trend / curriculum link / safeguarding priority

Example: A terror attack has been widely covered in the news and on social media. Students will have encountered graphic content, speculation, and potentially harmful commentary before arriving at school. The assembly addresses this directly, before misinformation or anxiety fills the gap.

Core Aim (one sentence only)

Example: To help students process a recent event accurately, safely, and with a shared understanding of how to respond if they encounter harmful content or feel distressed.

Section 2: Three Core Takeaways

By the end of this assembly, students should:

1. Understand _____
2. Recognise _____
3. Know how to _____

If you have more than three takeaways, simplify.

Example:

1. *Understand what terrorism is and why it happens — in factual, non-sensationalised terms*
2. *Recognise harmful responses, including online content that glorifies violence or scapegoats communities*
3. *Know how to seek support, report concerns, and talk safely about what they have seen or heard*

Section 3: Recommended Slide Structure (8–10 slides for a 10–15 minute assembly)

Slide 1 – Title and Framing (1 minute)

- Clear title
- One sentence of context
- Calm tone

Speaker guidance: Avoid alarmist or moral panic language.

Example: "You may have seen or heard about the attack in [location] this week. This assembly is a space to understand what happened, talk about how we respond, and make sure everyone here feels safe and supported." This opening acknowledges the event without dwelling on graphic detail, and immediately frames the assembly as supportive rather than punitive.

Slide 2 – What Is It? (2 minutes)

Provide 4–6 key words, a simple definition, and avoid jargon. Keep text minimal and readable from the back of a hall.

Example:

What is terrorism?

- Violence
- Ideology
- Fear
- Civilians
- Intent

"Terrorism is the use of violence or threats, usually against civilians, intended to create fear and advance a political or ideological goal. It is always illegal. It is never justified."

Defining the term clearly prevents students from filling the gap with social media framing. It also models the factual, calm register you want them to use.

Slide 3 – Scenario 1: Everyday Context (3 minutes)

Use a short, realistic narrative. Keep it relatable and age-appropriate. Do not begin with extreme examples.

Example: "Imagine a group chat the evening after the attack. Someone shares a clip from a news channel. Someone else posts a meme blaming an entire religious group. A few people react with laughing emojis. Someone feels uncomfortable but says nothing."

This scenario is realistic - most students will recognise it. It introduces the everyday social pressure that follows high-profile events without sensationalising the attack itself.

Slide 4 – How Norms Are Set (2 minutes)

Explain clearly:

- Silence can signal approval
- Laughter can normalise
- Escalation increases when unchallenged
- Intention does not remove impact

Example: "When no one challenges the message blaming an entire community, the group chat learns that view is acceptable here. That is how harmful norms spread — not always through aggression, but through silence."

Connecting this directly to the terror attack context gives this slide real weight. Students can see how a global event shapes local group dynamics within hours.

Slide 5 – Being a Leader (3 minutes)

Provide short behavioural scripts students can actually use. Students need language as well as theory.

- "That's not fair on people who had nothing to do with it."
- "I don't think that's the whole picture."
- "Are you ok? That looked like it upset you."
- "That's not what I've heard — where did you see that?"
- "Sharing that could get you in trouble."

In the context of a terror attack, students are likely to encounter content that blames entire communities, glorifies perpetrators, or spreads conspiracy theories. These

scripts give them a practical way to push back or disengage without escalating conflict.

Slide 6 – Scenario 2: Escalation (2–3 minutes)

Show how behaviour can develop: repetition, targeting, justifying harmful beliefs, direct messaging. Avoid graphic detail.

Example: "The same student begins sharing more content — videos, articles, commentary that presents the attack as evidence that a particular group is dangerous. They begin targeting classmates from that background directly. The group chat has moved from uncomfortable to harmful."

This escalation path — from passive sharing to targeted harassment — is realistic and documented in safeguarding literature. Naming it clearly helps students recognise it before it reaches a safeguarding threshold.

Slide 7 – Know Your Limits (2 minutes)

Clarify boundaries:

- Peer disagreement is normal
- Persistent targeting is not
- Threatening behaviour requires adult support

Example: "Feeling upset or confused after a terror attack is completely normal. Sharing that confusion is fine. But content that blames, threatens, or targets people because of their background crosses a line — and that is not something students should manage alone."

Use clear messaging: *"This is about safety, not getting someone in trouble."*

Slide 8 – Support and Reporting (1 minute)

Include:

- Safeguarding lead name and how to contact them
- Trusted adults
- Reporting systems
- Where students can go after the assembly

This slide is essential.

Example addition: include your school's anonymous reporting tool if you have one, and name a specific member of staff available at break and lunch that day. In the immediate aftermath of an attack, visible, named support matters.

Final Slide – Reflection Question (optional)

One simple question only. No structured discussion required.

"What does it mean to stand up for someone in the week after something like this?"

This is more grounded than a generic question about school community, and invites students to connect the assembly directly to the current moment.

Section 4: Safeguarding and Sensitivity Notes

Before delivery, consider:

- Recent local incidents or community connections to the attack
- Cultural or religious sensitivities — particularly if students share backgrounds with communities being scapegoated in media coverage
- SEND accessibility needs
- Avoid naming specific groups in a stigmatising way

Use a short safeguarding script at the start and end:

"If anything discussed today raises concerns for you personally, or if you've seen something online that worried you, please speak to your form tutor or [name of safeguarding lead] after the assembly."

Do not invite disclosures publicly.

In the context of a terror attack, this note is especially important. Some students may have personal or family connections to the event, the location, or communities affected. Brief pastoral teams before the assembly so they are alert and available.

Section 5: Differentiation Guide

KS2/3 Adaptation

Focus on friendship, online behaviour, kindness, and respect. Keep scenarios simple, language concrete, and framing emotional rather than ideological. Avoid legal discussion beyond basics.

Example: For younger students, focus on "things that upset people online" rather than naming terrorism directly. The message — that some content is harmful and that adults are there to help — applies at every age.

SEND Considerations

Use high-contrast slides, avoid dense text and fast transitions, and use clear and concrete language. Avoid sarcasm in scripts. Consider pre-sharing slides with pastoral teams.

When to Use a Workshop Instead

Do not rely on assembly alone if there has been a serious local incident, students are polarised, the topic requires debate, or you expect strong emotional responses.

In the immediate aftermath of an attack with local connections — for example, if a student's family member was present, or if the attack involved a community well represented in your school — a whole-school assembly may not be appropriate as a first response. Small group pastoral sessions may be more suitable.

Assembly introduces. Workshops deepen.

Optional Extension for Tutor Time

After the assembly, tutors may use:

1. "Why do people look for someone to blame after an attack like this?"
2. "What makes it hard to push back in a group chat?"
3. "When does something you see online become something you should tell an adult about?"

Limit to 10–15 minutes.

Final Checklist for Teachers

Before delivering, ask:

- Is this clear?
- Is this age-appropriate?
- Are slides readable from the back?
- Is the message behavioural rather than accusatory?
- Is safeguarding clearly signposted?

If yes, it is assembly-ready.

